

Bereavement Care

Phases and tasks of normal bereavement

- 1) Shock, numbness, and disbelief
- 2) Pining, yearning, searching, and protest
- 3) Disorganization, despair, and depression
- 4) Reorganization and recovery

Basic tasks of grief

- 1) Emancipation from the bonds to the deceased
- 2) Readjustment to an environment in which the deceased is missing
- 3) Formation of new relationships

Goals of grief counseling

- 1) Increase the reality of loss
- 2) Help the client deal with both expressed and latent effects
- 3) Help the client deal and overcome various impediments to readjustment after the loss
- 4) Encourage the client to make healthy emotional withdrawal from the deceased and to feel comfortable reinvesting that emotion in someone or something else

Anticipatory Grief

Anticipatory grief is what happens before the patient dies, but can impact greatly on how people cope at the time of and after death.

Assess for previous losses which remain unresolved

Assist patient with awareness of the impact of previous cumulative losses

Encourage the expressions of guilt, anger, and ambivalent feelings.

Signs of possible abnormal and/or complicate grief

- 1) Acquisition of the symptoms of the deceased
- 2) Radical changes in lifestyle, especially cutting off from all persons and/or activities associated with the deceased
- 3) Compulsion to imitate the deceased
- 4) Furious hostility
- 5) Lasting loss of patterns of social interaction
- 6) Agitated depression
- 7) Self-destructive behavior
- 8) Overactivity without a sense of loss

Treatment of the newly bereaved

- 1) Hear the sadness the bereaved are feeling and not rush to make them feel better
- 2) Provide substantial outreach to the bereaved to help them to keep their appointments
- 3) Home visits may be necessary
- 4) Early on, the bereaved will need to review the details of the death. Sit through the numerous retellings of what has occurred, as this helps the bereaved to master what has occurred
- 5) Provide education about the grief process
- 6) Help identify all the feelings the bereaved is experiencing
- 7) Counselling can be directive at times and is always supportive in nature

- 8) As time passes, the treatment process fosters a realistic view of the deceased, including both positive and negative attributes of the deceased
- 9) Help bereaved identify secondary losses and unfinished business
- 10) Give permission for small respites from the grief process, which can be physically and emotionally exhausting
- 11) Allot of work is working through the mourning process
- 12) Less support and more interpretation and work with the defenses characterize this middle phase of bereavement work.
- 13) As treatment nears completion, special care is given to the termination process, which engenders new feelings of loss and can evoke past feelings of loss.

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